

28: Spiro--34-35
116, 222, 476

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians
Ifalik

"Like the making of rope, the collection of toddy is, intrinsically, an individual process--only one man can climb a tree at one time. Yet this, too is done in a semi-communal fashion. The toddy is collected twice a day, and is collected at fairly regular times, so that a number of young men within a district collect their toddy [35] simultaneously, proceeding together to their individual groves, and returning together. This practice is even more marked in the afternoon than in the morning, so that we facetiously referred to this spectacle as the 'toddy parade', because the sight of eight or ten men walking single or double file through the village, was reminiscent of an American parade."

28: Spiro--147 [2]

116, 222, 512, 515

(1947-48) 1949

Woleaians

Ifalik

"In the late afternoon the young men again collect their toddy. And at the same time, they take their afternoon bath. Everyone bathes in the late afternoon. The women bathe in the lagoon directly in front of their houses, walking into the water, wearing their skirts. The men usually bathe in a secluded beach far from habitation, and change loin cloths, which they keep in the canoe houses. Both sexes use grated coconut meat as soap."

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Polynesian and Micronesian—had to carry the precious young plants with them on their long canoe voyages to new islands. 137
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The famous expedition of Captain Bligh with the BOUNTY had the purpose of bringing young breadfruit trees from Tahiti for establishment in the West Indies, where the planters thought it would be an ideal food for their African slaves. This first attempt at importing the tree was frustrated by the mutiny, but plants were successfully brought in on a subsequent voyage. Breadfruit, however, never became a staple in the West Indies. People do not adopt new foods easily (not even slaves), and where new staple foods have been adopted—as in the case of the potato in Ireland—it is generally because of overwhelming advantages. Breadfruit seems not to have demonstrated such advantages to any non-Pacific culture. 177
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We went out one morning with Tom and a young man of his household to gather breadfruit. The man who was going to pick the fruit carried a large coil of rope and a long pole which had a short cross-piece firmly tied near one end. We followed him through a complex maze of boondock paths to a large breadfruit tree. He threw the coil of rope over the lowest branch (about twenty feet up) and pulled it out with his pole, so that the rope was hanging double from the branch. 222 •

With the aid of the rope he climbed easily up the trunk to this first branch, whence he could scramble to any part of the top of the tree. We watched him walk upright along one horizontal branch about thirty feet above the ground, using his long pole as a sort of balance after the fashion of acrobats. With the pole he was able to break off fruit easily in any part of the tree, allowing the fruit to fall to the ground. The bruising apparently did not matter, though the fruit to be used for food must be gathered before it is completely ripe, while the pulp is still white and mealy. 202
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The fresh fruit is either baked or boiled, with many minor variations in ways of cooking. I didn't think much of it, no matter how cooked. It seemed no better or no worse than potatoes, palatable enough with meat gravy—but the Ifalukians didn't have meat gravy. 252

Breadfruit is the only food on Ifaluk that can be stored for any 000

Coral Island

262 milk or toddy as a liquid for cooking, than as a food in itself. But the
 252 green nuts everywhere provided a handy source of drink; and the
 [292] translucent, jelly-like flesh of these green nuts, eaten after the milk
 has been drunk, was surely a highly nutritious, though perhaps minor,
 food.

When a coconut sprouts, the hollow of the nut becomes filled with the white spongy tissue of a special absorbing organ (an extension of the cotyledon). This spongy tissue has a pleasant, sweetish taste and the Ifalukians were very fond of it. It often seemed to me that the juice of green coconuts filled the role on Ifaluk of soft drinks or mid-morning coffee in our culture; and that the spongy tissue of these sprouted nuts corresponded to candy bars, a tasty snack always readily available. The Ifalukian product, in both cases, would seem to be more "healthful" than its Western counterpart.

262 Toddy, or hachi, the sap that oozed from the cut flower stalks of
 222 coconuts, was a very important element in the Ifalukian dietary. Many palms have a strong flow of sap into the large, rapidly-growing flower stalks, and people in several parts of the world have learned to use this—most notoriously in a fermented form. The flow of sap was better in some coconut palms than in others, and on Ifaluk the particularly good palms were marked off for this special purpose of supplying toddy. Every morning and every evening all of the young men of the island were off on their rounds of collection, each with his special beat.

222 The toddy palms all had notches cut in the trunks to facilitate
 [48] climbing. A man would go to each of his palms in succession, climb up to the crown, pour the sap accumulated in a coconut shell into the bottle he carried, shear off a thin slice from the end of the cut flower stalk to stimulate sap flow, replace the coconut shell to catch the drip, and go on to the next palm. Several quarts of the fresh sap were

222 thus brought into every household each morning and evening.

262 The rich, sweetish sap was reserved primarily for the women and
 [562] children—its place in the diet of Ifaluk seemed to correspond to milk
 [855] in the diet of the West, and the regularity of the young men with their toddy chores reminded me strongly of the regularity of the milking chore in the rural West. It was, in fact, the only regularity we were

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able to observe on Ifaluk. Meal hours had no fixed time. There was generally only one large meal in a day, but the time of day at which this was eaten seemed to vary with the whim or convenience of each particular household. The time of toddy-collecting, however, was as unvarying as the sunrise and sunset with which it coincided; and every young man dropped whatever else he was doing at those times to carry out his chore. 202
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Officially, the toddy was always used fresh on Ifaluk. As Ted had found during his first visit to the island, the chiefs had decreed prohibition. They had observed the effect of alcohol on the peoples of some of the neighboring and more Westernized atolls, where the people had easily learned how to distill the fermented toddy into really potent stuff, and they had decided that for the peace and security of the island it would be best if even fermentation were not allowed. 272
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But toddy ferments easily and quickly. We noticed at some of the dance rehearsals an occasional older man with a definitely unsteady gait or a tendency to be too loud or too obvious, and concluded that he had allowed some toddy to follow its natural course by leaving it sit for a day. We had no direct evidence of the violation of prohibition, however, until toward the end of the summer when Tom offered us a sip from his bottle. 273

The stuff tasted very good to me, though perhaps I am no judge since my taste in alcohol is catholic. It had a pleasant, cider-like tang with, I should judge, about the strength of good beer.

Breadfruit, the two kinds of taro, and coconut, then, were the basic vegetables of the atoll. There were also a number of minor crops—especially papayas and several kinds of bananas and plantains. The papayas were fair, the bananas excellent, but they seemed to be little used by the people. We were often brought cooked green papayas, which have a squash-like texture and taste, and this seemed to be the way they were most commonly used. We were kept constantly supplied with bananas—we always had a bunch or two hanging to ripen in the Fan Nap—but the people seemed to consider them to be children's food. They appeared to prize the banana plants more for the fiber they got from the stem than for the fruit. 262
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[824]

Fish formed the basic animal food, but the people also had pigs 600